

Kevin Collins Wins Bernhardt Award at SWOSU

03.17.2016

Dr. Kevin Collins, professor in the Department of Language & Literature, is the winner of the Bernhardt Academic Excellence Award for 2016 at Southwestern Oklahoma State University in Weatherford.

Collins was presented the prestigious award at the annual Bernhardt banquet held on the SWOSU campus. For winning the award, Collins received a \$5,000 cash award, clock, pen and medallion.

SWOSU alumni Dr. William and Theta Juan Bernhardt of Midwest City are sponsors of the annual award that goes to an outstanding faculty member who exhibits exceptional achievement in teaching, scholarship and service.

Kevin Collins received a B.A. in English from San Francisco State University in 1985 and taught for nine years in California secondary schools before earning an M.A. from San Diego State University in 1997 and a Ph. D from the University of Arkansas in 2002. From there, he accepted a two-year visiting professorship at the University of West Georgia, and he joined the SWOSU faculty in 2004.

When he first arrived at SWOSU, Collins's teaching loads were almost exclusively general education courses, courses that brought to the same classrooms some of SWOSU's best students, students in need of remediation, and students of every ability level between these two extremes. By trial and error, Collins developed a series of pedagogical techniques that succeeded, at the same time, in offering challenges to students who had never before been challenged by school work and in offering real opportunities for success to students who had never before succeeded in the classroom. These techniques, known to his students by names such as "Six Grades" and "This Class Rules," have a single feature in common: they all reward the efforts students make in class rather than the advantages gained in their families or in earlier schooling. When he started teaching specialty courses, Collins adapted these techniques to his major students, and they paid comparable dividends.

Collins's own scholarly work includes substantial editorial and creative work, but his greatest achievements have been critical investigations of the works of William Gilmore Simms, the most influential and prolific author of the ante bellum American South. Collins has produced for the University of Arkansas Press the only critical editions of two of Simms's three Colonial Romances—*The Cassique of Kiawah* and *Vasconselos*—and he wrote introductions for reprint editions of the same titles released by the University of South Carolina Press, establishing him as the foremost living authority on Simms's Colonial Romances.

His service to his communities is highlighted by his 11 years with the Weatherford Arts Council, which includes two years as president. His presidency saw the largest successful event in the council's history—Art Walk 2010.

Collins was also a sustaining member in the Weatherford Rotary Club from 2009 until 2015. He remains active in service to his communities in activities such as the

art show at the Watonga Wine and Cheese Festival and a community art exhibition at SWOSU in 2015. In addition, he was recently honored with an appointment to the board of the Western Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, an organization dedicated to heightening literacy among disadvantaged area residents. Highlights of his service to the SWOSU community include his presidency of the Faculty Senate, his coaching of the championship *Mind Games* team, and his membership on three different strategic planning teams.

Previous winners of the Bernhardt Award are (in order by year): Dr. Vilas Prabhu, Dr. Stuart Burchett, Dr. Gary Wolgamott, Dr. Terry Segress, Dr. James Hunsicker, Dr. Jill Jones, Dr. James Breckenridge, Dr. John Ludrick, Dr. W. Steven Pray, Dr. Les Crall, Dr. Peter Grant, Dr. John Hayden, Dr. Virgil Van Dusen, Steve Strickler, Dr. Mary Aspedon, Dr. John Woods, Dr. Scott Long, Dr. Charles Rogers, Dr. Tim Hubin, Dr. Brian Campbell, Dr. Patsy Parker and Dr. Tom Davis.